

FICTION

Johnny Thunder

by Peter Detanger

CONCLUSION of the story *Johnny Thunder* by Peter Detanger.

Far away, on the flat prairie, it wasn't tires singing on the hi-way. It sounded like an animal.

A howl. A high stretching, howling cry. It was alone.

A shiver shot through me, not that it scared me. I was never scared of anything.

Then there was silence again on the dark land. I looked up to see if the sound came from above. I hadn't noticed initially, but now I saw a partly-clouded sky, stars twinkling in between and the moon had disappeared, hidden behind the clouds.

I could still taste the tobacco from the cigarette that clung between my teeth, but it had gone out. I struck another match on the leg of my jeans and lit it again. I took a long deep drag and the slowly blew the smoke from my lungs. Damn I loved to smoke at that time of the night.

I stood there smoking and listening.

There was no sound. So I looked up again. The dark cloud was alive and moving and the moon slowly rose above it.

I stood there smoking and watching.

The moon, so full, round and silvery had put new light on the land I was lost upon. Beyond the moon the stars shone, but I watched the slow rolling cloud as it began to take shape. I watched the clouds form wings and an arching, ruffled head. The cloud became an eagle. I could soon see the claws and the sharp beak. The wings spread out full and wide and it even had a fluffy tail.

Then I heard it again. The howl.

A high long howl of a wolf. The breeze carried it away and it faded into the darkness. I looked around again at the flat endless hi-way the darkness, the navy sky and the eagle

cloud that really didn't look like an eagle any more.

I pulled the joint out of my pocket and lit it. Smoke it if you got it, I thought. I toked on it hard and when I threw away the roach I was stoned. Good.

I walked on. My dusty cowboy boots were scraping the hi-way. I could still hear the howl echoing in my head. I could still see the eagle drifting across the sky.

Suddenly there was a flash of light behind me. It startled me. I turned around quick like and fired my thumb toward the sky. As I did a camper shot past. I hadn't even heard it coming. A gust of wind whined behind it as it zoomed away. I stood and watched the red tail lights disappear into the darkness. What else could I do? So I just walked on. I was really too stoned to think straight.

Two maybe three semi-trucks passed me by without even slowing down. The gust of hard wind behind them almost sucked me in every time.

I noticed some bushes on the side of the road. I walked through the ditch through the heavy grass weighed down with dried dust. I lay down and put my head on my pack and my jacket over top of me.

I saw a light far away. Dawn I thought, as I tried to keep my eyes open. The eyes of daylight slowly...slowly...slowly opening and mine closed and I fell into a deep sleep.

It was the furious sun and a semi-truck that woke me up. I sat up, rubbed the sleep from my eyes and headed back out to the hi-way. I dug in my pocket for a smoke and lit it.

Another day. Walking on the hi-way was the story of my life.

I wished I had some water to drink and to wash with, I wished I

had saved that joint that I smoked the night before. But all the wishing in the world wasn't going to do me any good. I just walked on.

The sun was high already. It was hot. Very hot. I recalled someone saying at one time that the rays of the sun were harmful. Hell I would survive. I always have. I always will.

I thought about the night before as I was walking. I remembered the howl and the eagle cloud. It made me shiver again.

What was it supposed to be? A vision? A sign? I couldn't make heads or tails of it.

There I was an Indian. Full blood. I didn't know anything about visions or signs. Was I supposed to? Hell, how did I know?

I remember hearing old people say that this once was our country. They said that the Great Spirit created it for the Indians, then the white people came along and stole it. I could never understand how the white people could have stolen a country. If that was true how come I was still walking on it? I recall hearing white people talk. They said that long ago when their ancestors were travelling west they had to be careful. There was an Indian behind every tree.

Nowadays I'm an Indian travelling all around Indian country and there's white people around every corner. They don't like us though. I can feel it by the way they look at me. I can see it in their eyes.

Yeah man! Sometimes I feel like I was born in a century gone by. Here I am in the twentieth century walking alone down a hi-way, not knowing where I'm going.

I have to say though, that I felt different that morning. I felt like an Indian. I can't tell you why or explain how an Indian feels, you have to be an Indian to know that.

But damn I felt good. ♦

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Our Voice

the spare change magazine

Helping out When it's COLD out!

Tenant wins back apartment deposit in cockroach case



Norman Gaucher, left, his lawyer Derek Chapman, centre, and advocate Leo Regehr, right.

In a shot against slum landlords on January 12, provincial court judge K.D. Hope ordered a slum landlord to return a tenant's money and pay court costs.

Norman Gaucher rented a suite, putting down \$300 in damage deposit and \$900 for two months rent. Gaucher testified that the lights were off when he saw the suite, but it looked O.K. to him.

When Gaucher went to move in, he had the power turned on.

"My girlfriend was with me," Gaucher said. "She went to use the bathroom. She hollered. There were cockroaches on the toilet and on the ceiling. In the kitchen they were in the cupboards and even in the fridge."

Gaucher called the caretaker, and then met with landlord Pran Sawhney. Gaucher told the landlord he was not moving in and demanded his money back.

Sawhney refused. Acting in his own defense, he said that Gaucher had signed a lease. He had not given written notice or returned the keys, so as far as he was concerned the suite was rented.

As he delivered his verdict, Judge Hope said, "The landlord will think twice before he tries this again. He can't pretend to know the rules of the game and use that to treat the tenant badly. Regardless of what the tenant said or did, the suite had to be habitable." ♦

Our Voice

Publishers:
Bissell Centre, Edmonton
Edmonton City Centre Church
Corporation, Edmonton
Managing Editor and Design:
Keith Wiley
Writer and Poetry editor:
Michael Walters

Bissell Centre
10527-96 Street • Edmonton •
T5H 2H6
Phone: 428-4001 • Fax: 429-7908

Paper Distribution Calgary •
Rick Whittaker

EMAIL:
sparechg@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca

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EMAIL: sparechg@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca

OUR NEWS

Our Voice welcomes Edmonton distribution manager Patty Kennedy, writer Michael Walters

STORY AND PHOTO BY
JOHN ZAPANTIS



Our Voice is proud to announce the appointment of Patty Kennedy as the Edmonton **Our Voice** Distribution Manager. She was hired in November of 1997.

Michael Walters, who has been writing for the magazine for the past two years, and worked as distribution manager for some time, is coming on staff part-time as a writer and organizer.

Patty is a graduate of the Child and Youth Care program at

Grant MacEwan College and was previously employed at the Inner City Youth Housing Project for two years.

Her responsibilities as **Our Voice** Distribution Manager include hiring new vendors and placing them in appropriate locations, fielding many calls from the public about the vendors, dealing with complaints, monitoring vendor performances, doing vendor patrols while they are selling to ensure they are adhering to their code of conduct, as well as administrative duties.

"I hope I can give the vendors stability and comfort when it comes to them selling the magazine," Patty says.

Writing
CONTEST
Deadline Feb. 15

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Tell your story, tell the truth, and win an IBM computer and printer to continue with your writing. **Our Voice** is looking for true stories of personal experiences. They could be experiences of hard times, of sad times, or happy stories of overcoming difficulties or obstacles. The stories must be true, about your real life experiences. The story should be between two to four pages, 700 to 1000 words.

Only new writers who have never been published before in **Our Voice** will be eligible for this contest. The winning story will be published as a special feature in the March '98 issue of **Our Voice**.

Decisions of the **Our Voice** judges will be final. Deadline for Entries is February 15, 1998.

All submissions become the property of **Our Voice**. Be sure to keep your own copy of your story and send it to **Our Voice** at 10527-96 Street, Edmonton, T5H 2H6, Fax it to: 403-429-7908, or email it to us at sparechg@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca. The prize is a donated IBM PS I, colour monitor, with 24 pin dot matrix printer.

Our Voice

IN CALGARY Hundreds of homeless flock to shelters in the cold....

A city warehouse was outfitted with toilets and turned into a 200 bed emergency shelter during winter's first cold snap.



CALGARY IS A BOOMING TOWN, BUT WHEN COLD WEATHER HIT IN JANUARY, IT QUICKLY BECAME APPARENT THAT THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE WITHOUT SHELTER.

Calgary agencies were planning for emergency shelter early in the fall, because they already knew the problem was going to be bigger this year. But the City didn't come through with the warehouse space until the cold weather hit and it became evident there really was an emergency. The province put up \$100,000 to help cover costs for emergency shelter.

The Calgary agencies, together with the City, have turned an east-side City parks warehouse into a giant sleeping room for people.

It's a service that really does save lives. "You better believe it," says Dermot Baldwin executive director of the Calgary Drop-in Centre, the agency managing the emergency shelter. "There's no other place for people to go, we are about their last resort." Otherwise the people would be out on the street and at risk for their lives in the cold weather.

At the Mustard Seed in downtown Calgary, Floyd Perras says there has been a lot of demand for shelter. "We're trying to stay at 64 people a night. That's all the

mats we have." There are always more people who need a place, and he says they put a lot of people on the bus that goes out to the warehouse emergency shelter at 9:30 pm.

The warehouse, called the Transitional Centre, is for men only. It has cots for up to 200 people, and in January some 75 to 80 people were using it every night.

"It's not an ideal situation," says Baldwin, "but it's better than the alternative."

Women and families have even fewer options. The Drop-In Centre puts up over 30 women every night at their main centre downtown. Altogether they are squeezing about 45 people in every night, well above their capacity, and they've been doing it for the past three years, says Baldwin. The Drop-In Centre's other facility in northeast Calgary is also full, says Baldwin. Altogether the Centre is putting up about 280 people every night.

With a close to zero vacancy rate in Calgary, there is little housing quickly available, and it is rapidly becoming more expensive. People coming in to the province looking for work are some of the people who are without shelter, he says. Others just can't afford a place to live. ♦

Calgary churches taking in homeless

Two kinds of cold conspire, with varying degrees of complicity, against the people we hear about freezing on park benches. While the one - the cold of the climate - is unavoidable, the other - the coldness of society - is often the more withering. In From the Cold, a Calgary ecumenical program, offers respite from both.

Thirty participating churches take turns once a month opening their doors to people under the In From the Cold program. Referred by agencies like CUPS, the 15 or so guests are driven by bus to the appointed church where they can expect a "warm, good supper," a place to sleep, a chance to have a shower, and most importantly, some respect. Street people often "don't get to talk to mainline people. We sit and visit with them," says Ross Mutton, coordinator for Knox United Church. He finds this a much more fulfilling expression of faith than, say, "ushering at a service."

The program began in St. Stephen's Anglican Church about a year ago and has continued to grow in scope. Mindful of the changing demographics of homelessness, it gives priority to children, women and couples. "It seems to us in Calgary there are quite a few options for single men, but not for women," Mutton explains, pointing to the number of single-mom families sleeping in vans. There is no enforced rotation of guests. If someone covered by the program's criteria needs a place overnight, every effort is made to accommodate them. "We work in concert with the Mustard Seed; if we're short one or two guests, we'll take in some of theirs," says Mutton.

"Our main agenda is to give people a safe clean, place to stay."

—Sabitri Ghosh

"Buycott" of fair trade Bridgehead coffee

by Tim Eckert

"Let's go for coffee." You're at a local cafe, enjoying some java, one of the small pleasures of life.

But where did your coffee come from? It's a bitter deal for the millions of Third World farmers who grow coffee - after oil, the second largest commodity in the world. You probably paid more than a dollar for that cup, but the growers got only a few pennies. Small-scale farmers with a few acres of land don't produce enough to export directly, so they are forced to sell their beans to middlemen (women are seldom involved) at very low prices. These coffee traders keep a large share of the price; among producers, they are known as coyotes. In fact, most of your coffee money goes to the retailers, packagers, and marketers. Even though prices have risen in the past year, the farmers can neither expect to see any benefits nor count on prices staying



high.

There is an alternative. Small farmers have organized into democratic cooperatives that sell directly to coffee companies. They avoid the coyotes and earn more.

Twenty-six years ago, the Ten Days for Global Justice program was established in Canada by the Anglican, Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian, and United Churches, and the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. The ten focus days for 1998 are February 13 - 22. "A Taste for Justice" is this year's theme, and the promotion of Bridgehead coffee is one of this year's goals. Rather than a boycott of products, this consumer action program is a "buycott" of a product that should be promoted.

Over ten years ago, Canadian churches helped to set up Bridgehead, one of Canada's first alternative trading organizations. Since fair trade holds up human dignity and the right to make a living as being more important than profits for a few, if we are to treat others as we would wish to be treated, it's time to consider an alternative.

Bridgehead also sells the coffee, and other fair trade products out of Toronto (1-800-565-8563). You can ask your local grocer and cafe owner to stock it, so that "Fair Trade" sales of coffee can increase. Look for a logo that says Transfair or Fair TradeMark. The Fair Trade movement is already well established in Europe, where fairly traded coffee has up to 5% of the coffee market in several countries.

In March, Ten Days wants to run an ad promoting Bridgehead, and needs names to include in the list of church people calling on coffee companies and grocery chains to offer fairly traded coffee as an option for ethical consumers. The Ten Days committee is seeking donations of any amount for the ad.

For more information contact Ten Days in Edmonton at Rosanne Thede (Lutheran) 461-2237 Joan Desrochers (United) 450-6912 Marilyn McClung (Anglican) 436-5195 Mary McLennan (Presbyterian) 467-7456 Linda Winski (Social Justice Commission / Catholic) 420-1306

Ten Days for Global Justice, 77 Charles St. West, Suite 401, Toronto, ON, M5S 1K5 Website: <http://www.web.net/~tendays> ♦



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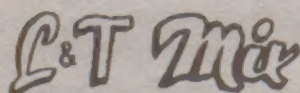
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HOW TO ROB FROM THE RICH A simple guide to a simpler, cheaper life

BY DON SCOTT

To practice voluntary simplicity is to deliberately choose to use our planet's resources in the most efficient and least destructive manner possible, while at the same time making the most of our own lives, and the lives of those around us. This means squeezing every penny 'til it screams, or making do without using any pennies at all. (Its not for nothing that we call our dollar the loonie; taking money too seriously is for the birds, and those who do so are all wet.) Voluntary simplicity means choosing to live cheap.

We only have three essential choices when it comes to money and the things that it buys: voluntary simplicity, involuntary simplicity, or get another job.

A great deal has already been written telling us all how to eat on \$3.29 a week, or how to live under a large spruce tree without disturbing the squirrels that live above. I, however, in my somewhat hidebound and moderately crabbit negativity, prefer to give advice on what not to do, and how to at least begin to not do it! That means not having to use or lose money. Here's how:

Don't pay interest. Minimize absolutely what you pay! Why spend your life lining the pockets of some silly bank in Hogtown? Interest paid to another will gain you absolutely nothing in the long run. Most purchases that require a loan are most likely bad investments anyway, even without the interest involved. The only time you should borrow is if it actually saves money in the long run, interest included. Don't let your assets depreciate - buy used. That \$2,500 computer will be worth \$200 in 5 years. Buy the good working used one and let someone else take the financial hit. There are, of course exceptions. Don't, for example, buy used facial tissue.

Don't pay rent! All that you are doing by renting is putting money into someone else's investment. If you need to rent, live in the simplest possible type of accommodation that suits your basic needs, until you can buy, and pay into your own investment. If others can tolerate liv-

ing with you, share a modest apartment. And when you do buy, be reasonable. There isn't much use in coming home half-dead from struggling to meet the mortgage, to a palace that you are too tired to enjoy.

Don't pay taxes! The less money that you need to live your life to the fullest, the less time that you will spend working for Revenue Canada. Buy things second-hand from private individuals. (Used automobiles, for instance, are GST free purchased from someone other than a dealer.) Keep your municipal taxes under control by living in the simplest dwelling possible. Make the best possible use of RRSPs or other available tax shelters. From a purely personal perspective, money paid out in taxes is no better spent than \$100 dollar bills used to light cigars. (For those

We only have three essential choices when it comes to money and the things that it buys: voluntary simplicity, involuntary simplicity, or get another job.

concerned about the social benefits paid for with tax dollars, remember that its practically impossible to completely avoid paying some taxes, esp. GST and municipal levies.) Do stay out of jail! Remember that tobacco and alcohol are taxed to the absolute limit.

Most of the real fun in life is best experienced without deadlines. By practicing voluntary simplicity, the time you don't spend in the pursuit of money will be freed up for the huge range of past-times that are both pleasurable and free, or at least quite inexpensive. Compare the time quality and cost of a rushed taxi trip of about 4 miles, compared to the time quality and cost of a leisurely walk over the same distance. A person with some real time on their hands might even write a funny little article if they were feeling sadistic.

If all of this sounds hard-nosed and mercenary, remember that none of the above precludes living a life of charity and giving. By practicing voluntary simplicity, it is much easier to give what we want, however we want to. The old adage that "the best things in life are free" is as meaningful as ever, advertising to the contrary. ♦

Don Scott is a simple liver in Edmonton and Onoway.

Money helps sometimes but you can't buy healing...

"Well, that will just solve that problem," quipped Michael about the day's headline: \$450 million fund for victims of residential schools. "No more Indian problems," he said. It was heavy sarcasm, but I'm sure he didn't mean that the fund should not be set up, only that even that sum of money can't just buy a solution. The wounds caused by the residential schools were very painful for many, many people. Healing can be helped along by the funding, but healing can't be bought outright.

The next day I was talking to a young native woman about it. She told me she'd been sent to a residential school in Saskatchewan when she was just six years old. I was amazed. "You're too young," I said. "That was in 1973 or '74," she said. "I wasn't abused or anything, but I didn't see my family for months at a time."

There still are residential schools for young native people in Saskatchewan. We trust they are positive opportunities for young people today, not forceful tools of assimilation. But I was amazed that this young woman had been sent to a school.

"They wouldn't let us Indian kids go to school in town," she told me. "The principal wouldn't allow it." So the residential school was her only option, and she left her family when she was only six. One painful incident she did recall was a base-



ball accident. She was hit in the mouth by a bat. Her jaw was badly smashed and she spent some time in hospital with her mouth wired shut. When she went home next vacation her mother wanted to know why she had gotten so thin. "The school never even told my family about the accident," she said.

Even worse was what happened to her two brothers. "They've had tough lives, one's just getting out of jail now. I always wondered, if I turned out OK, we had the same family, why did they get in to so much trouble." Now she knows more. The brothers were sent to a school where a priest, who already had a record as a sexual offender, had been hired to teach. The boys were both sexually assaulted and abused at the school. Their lives never really came together after that, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, and trouble followed.

Now she says her brothers are launching a case against the priest so charges will be laid.

But she says, even when he goes to jail, although it will help, it won't heal her brothers. They have a long road to overcome the early wounds they took as young and vulnerable children. The fund can help, but even millions of dollars aren't a quick prescription for the pain caused by residential schools. ♦

—Keith Wiley

A dream where leaders help the poor as much as they help the rich

"I have a dream." This is what Martin Luther King said. We all know this. We have all at one point in our lives heard bits and pieces of that memorable speech.

If you don't mind Dr. King, I wish to humbly borrow your famous words for I too have a dream.

It's a dream about all people, no matter what race, religion, size, or gender living together in our country, caring for and respecting one another.

It's a dream where people are not disregarded and outcast because of any circumstance that their lives may have come to involve.

It's a dream where people's lives will not be destroyed and broken because of their pasts or because of incidents they have no control over.

It's a dream where people unable to acquire wealth will not be scapegoated by governments who are simply trying to retain power and increase their own wealth.

It's a dream where the leaders of our country will help the poor at least as much as they help the rich.

But what we experience in our country is far from the beauty of this dream.

We see many first nations people, living desolate and tragic lives all around us. They are still reeling from hundreds of years of abuse and from having their culture destroyed by greed and power.

We also see systems in place that are supposed to help people, but that seems to be the last thing they do. People who are injured while trying to contribute to the market place in search of their own dreams. In many cases these people don't receive the compensation that they are entitled to by law. They too end up living desolate and poor lives.

We see people who are unable to find jobs because of their race or age or gender in our underachieving economy. These people have to jump through hoop after hoop of government paper policy in order to receive money that doesn't sufficiently feed their children.

We see people sleeping on the streets and eating from dumpsters.

We see wealthy domestic and foreign corporations getting billions of dollars in handouts and subsidies.

We hear the government distort the facts and blame our financial problems on the poor and on the working people when really our primary expense is to pay the interest on a debt that was created by making the rich richer. Yet many of us believe these facts and allow these things to continue.

Maybe my dream is that people will one day be worth more than money.

I saw a white lady sitting on a bus. Two young black kids, a guy and a girl, who looked like students got on the bus and sat on the bench next to her. She stood up and immediately moved to the front of the bus. It was obvious why. The couple couldn't believe it. You could see sadness in their eyes.

I don't know what to tell you Dr. King, maybe some things will never change.

Maybe the things in my dream will never change.

A wise man said once that "energy and persistence alter all things." If I may, I will add hope to that quotation. Martin Luther King had hope behind his dream for racial equality. We need hope for all people and from all people, because people, no matter where they come from or what they do are the seeds of life, purely and absolutely, and in our society we seem to forget that too often. ♦

—Michael Walters

Unable to work

When illness or injury ends a working career, is desperate poverty what awaits?

It's the same story repeated with different voices, and different faces. It's the story of injured workers who have been unable to collect benefits. They are people who have waited months or even years for the appeal process to review their claims, or who have given up and accepted a life limited by poverty and pain.

Manuel Januario has carpal-tunnel syndrome, a repetitive strain injury. Before he was injured, he was doing pipe-related work. He lives with his wife and four year old daughter.

"My family are the most important thing in the world to me," he says.

After his injury, they had to give up their home and move into an apartment, and sell two of their three vehicles. Januario's wife works to support the family.

Januario has had surgery twice on his left hand. He's asking for surgery on his right hand, and retraining so he can go back to work in another field.

"They keep denying my right hand because I'm diabetic," Januario says.

He first appealed in June of 1996, but was denied, again in October of 1996 and was denied, then in October of 1997. As a result of his latest appeal, he will be given a new hearing.

While waiting for his claim to be reviewed, Januario is in pain, he doesn't sleep well, and his life is severely limited.

"It's the little things. Before I could lift 500 to 600 pounds. Now, I can't even lift a cup of coffee. I have to depend on my wife to shave me and to tie my shoelaces. Sometimes I can't snap the buttons. I burned my daughter twice because I couldn't feel the water temperature. Now, my hand is hypersensitive. I use my elbow to judge temperatures."

Januario is supposed to be getting regular payments from the WCB, but often the cheques don't come.

"According to the WCB, I'm getting paid, but I'm not getting paid," he says. "My files get replaced. Two

of my caseworkers left on maternity leave."

Marvin Jahn is a man who has worked hard for most of his life. He has gone from making over \$20 an hour to subsisting on welfare.

"I quit school in Grade 9 and went to work in the mines," he says. "It was either that or the sawmills and the mines paid better."

Jahn's original accident was September 17, 1971, when he was buried in a cave-in. He suffered knee and lower back injuries and broken ribs.

Since then, Jahn has had five operations on his left hand. **Manuel Januario worked with pipe until his hands gave out. He's waiting for more surgery and is president of PIWCS.**



Getting injured on the job can be disastrous. If you can't work anymore, or at your old job, how do you survive? In Alberta there is a special government agency that handles the cases of people injured at work. The Workers' Compensation Board was developed in 1915. It was specifically established as an inquiry system intended to eliminate confrontation between injured workers and employers. This was to allow for speedy payments to workers and to reduce costs for employers, who before the placement of the act, were being driven out of business by employees suing them for recovery of wages lost because of work-related injuries.

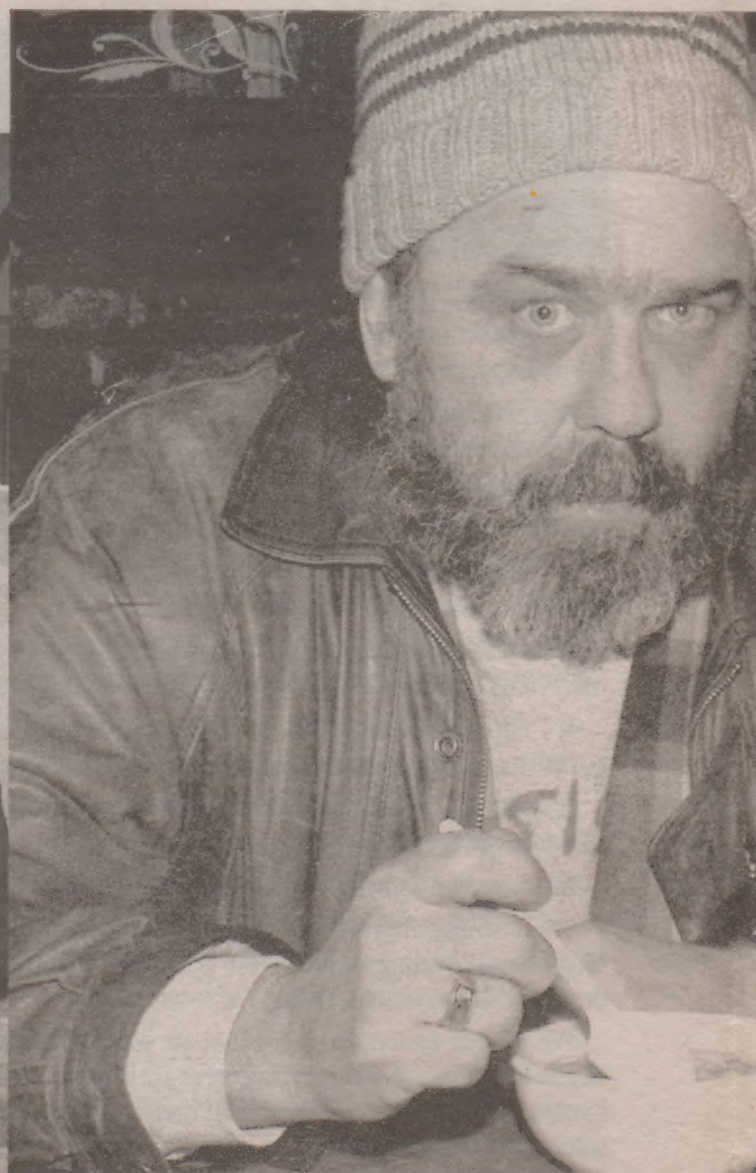
Now, nearly a century later, there are problems with the system. In March of last year, a group called the Provincial Injured Workers' Coalition Society (PIWCS) formed because of growing discontent and increasing difficulty for injured workers who need to receive benefits from the WCB.

"The reason the group formed was because of the unjust ways the WCB operates. We had to put a level of accountability back into the system. We wanted to show their true colors. Injured workers were going bankrupt and being forced to the streets and they couldn't care less," says Manuel Januario, President of the Provincial Injured Workers Coalition Society.

The WCB maintains it is doing a good job of fairly compensating workers.

"There are only three reasons that we'd deny someone's claim. If the worker is not covered, if there is not enough information to process the claim, and if, at our discretion, we feel the accident is not a result of employment."

Marvin Jahn drove construction equipment until an accident badly injured him.



"In 1996 we only denied 540 out of 98,303 claims," says Nancy Saul-Demers, a spokesperson for the WCB.

That went up a bit in 1997 out of 118,121 claims, 1,033 were denied. Only 2 percent of serious, lost-time claims were denied, says Demers.

Currently in Alberta there are 1734 claimants going through the appeals process and there are over 2600 members of PIWCS.

"The WCB is based on a no-fault system. Whether it was the worker's fault or the employer's fault, if the accident was work related in anyway, the injured worker has a right to benefits. We shouldn't be forced to appeal for what by law is ours," says Januario.

The WCB gets its money from Alberta employers who, by law, contribute a payroll tax, like insurance premiums. The more the WCB has to pay out, the more it has to collect from Alberta employers. When there is a claim against a particular employer, their "premiums" can go up, just like with insurance. When WCB saves money, the businesses and employers save money too.

"One of the things they like to do is use their medical advisors to look through your complete medical history to try and relate your injury to something from your past. There are medical guidelines and we have doctors who know our situations. They don't need medical advisors. It's a trick they use to deny people benefits and the cost of them is a drain on the system. It's crazy," says Januario.

"Once people have to go through long appeals, they have to survive somehow. They go on welfare or long-term disability or AISH (Assured Income Support for the Handicapped). They should be on WCB. It breaks up families and ruins lives. Once all the resources are gone

knee. He is still in pain.

Over the years, he has worked whenever he could, but in August, 1993 he quit the mines when he got miners' lung.

Jahn's WCB was terminated in 1994. Since then, he has been on medical unemployment insurance, then worked in a six month work program with social services at \$6 an hour. Now on welfare, home is a one-room bachelor suite in the inner city.

"My life is a nightmare," Jahn says as he hunches over a bowl of soup at the Mustard Seed Street Church where he regularly comes for lunch.

Jahn first appealed in 1976, going right to the ombudsman, but was unable to receive a satisfactory settlement

"I'm asking for retraining so I can do a different type of work," Jahn says. "I've spent most of my life underground."

He also wants compensation for the time he's been off work and a living wage from WCB until he can work again.

James MacMurtry sounds tired and defeated.

"I went from \$3500 a month to an \$800 a month disability pension," he says.

MacMurtry, 56, is unable to work, and in constant pain. He has lost his home and his family has split up.

MacMurtry was a heavy equipment operator running a bulldozer for the municipal district of Mayhill, when he was injured in a truck accident in 1979. Two

vertebrae in his neck were badly damaged in a truck accident.

"I was hounded to go back to work," he says.

"Returning to the same type of work damaged more vertebrae."

Virginia Louscer lost the use of her right hand and is expected to find a new job.

Upon his return to work, he was to be put on light duty. This turned out to be driving a grader instead of a bulldozer.

"I feel that they could have handled things a lot better," says MacMurtry.

His condition worsened, and he developed problems with his hands and his heart. When he could no longer work with heavy equipment, MacMurtry got a part-time job as a school janitor.

"My wife and my son did most of the work," he says.

He was forced to sell his acreage at a loss, and moved into Edmonton in 1995 where he shares an apartment with his 19 year old son.

MacMurtry feels that retraining after his first accident could have prevented further work related injuries. Instead, he lives with severe limitations and constant pain.

He is putting together an appeal.

Virginia Louscer drives up in a late model truck. On first impression, you wouldn't suspect that she is surviving on social assistance.

Louscer sits down and carefully cradles her right hand in her lap. She uses her left hand exclusively. Although it's warm in the room, the fingers of her right hand are icy cold, and even a slight movement causes it to change color.

"I'm embarrassed to go into a restaurant because my hand may go into spasms. I always have to find a comfortable place for my hand," Louscer says.

Louscer's life changed on March 21, 1997. She had just started a new job two days before, and if not for the accident she may have still been working there. An underground airline blew up injuring her right arm.

Since then, Louscer lives with pain and fear. She has lost her faith in the workplace.

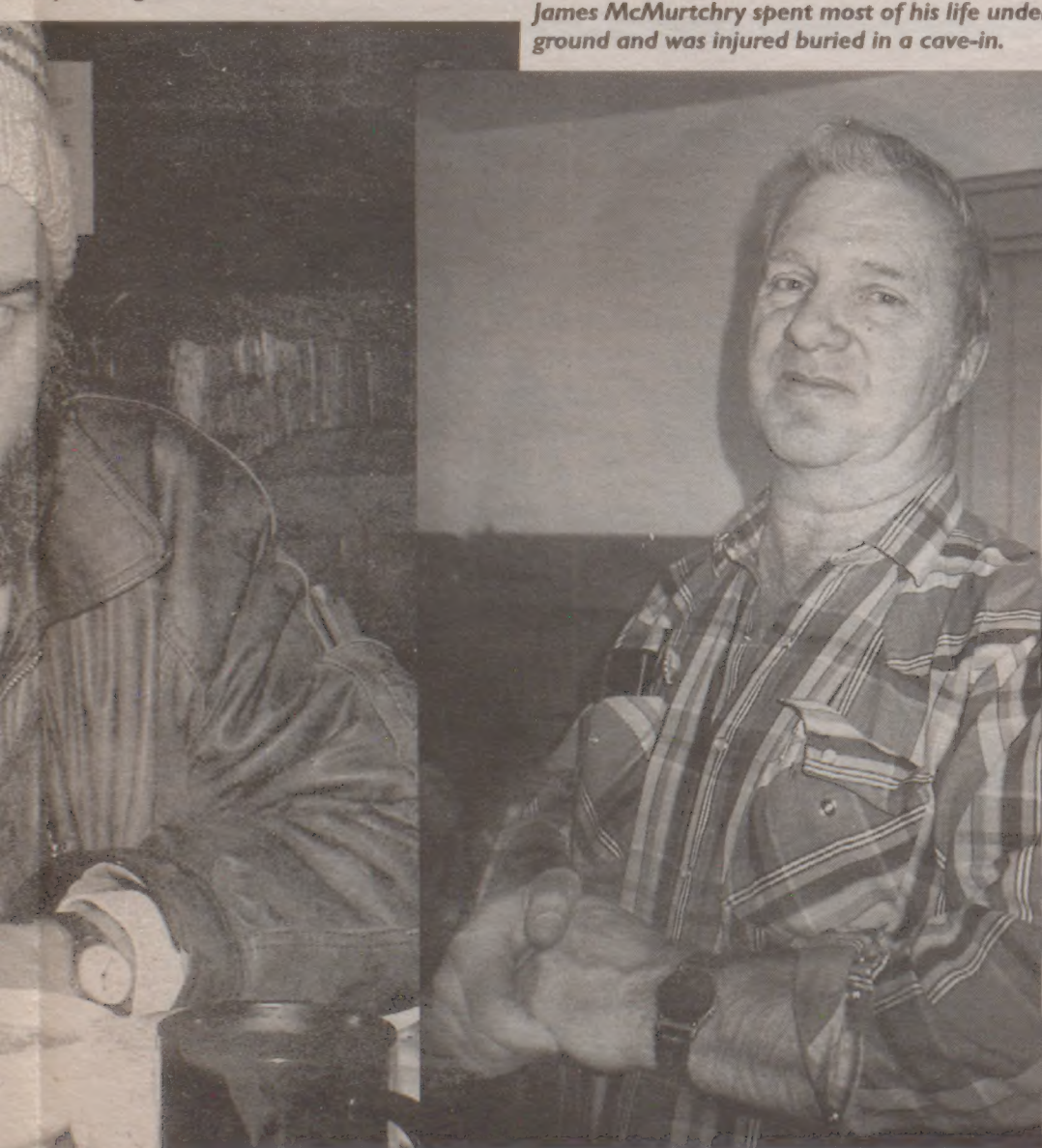
A safety report on the accident stated that the blow-up was due to metal fatigue.

"I was told that I was an incompetent worker because I was in the wrong place at the wrong time," she says. Louscer was fired two days after the accident because she could no longer do her job.

Louscer was cut off WCB in June because of a decision deeming her fit for work. She is waiting for an appeal, and she's bitter about it. "There's been times of not eating because of my physiotherapy," she says. I should not be on social assistance. I should be on WCB." ♦

James MacMurtry spent most of his life underground and was injured buried in a cave-in.

badly damaged his health.





POETRY

Can You Relate

I know I have to
forgive and love myself
so I can go on
with my life.
It will be one of the hardest
things I'll ever have to do.
But I have to do it.
Can you relate?

Jean Allen

I trusted
someone who tired of me.
I am desolate-
unharvested grain
for the autumn wind.

Ono no Komachi
Japanese 9th century.

*Our Voice welcomes your submission
of poetry. Please keep your own copy
of your works, we cannot return sub-
missions. Poetry editor is Michael
Walters.*

Skid Row Heaven

Where do we go when we leave this place.
Is there a back alley of joy
where we can share a smile or two
with those of us who left a day or so ago.

sitting over yonder is an old friend of mine.
we often traverse the heartless road.
sometimes sleeping under the stars.
yet we never forget the man upstairs.

Where do we go when we leave this place?
is there a spot of full of love
where we can humble ourselves
with those of us who left a day or so ago.

Sitting over yonder is an old friend of mine.
We panhandled in the thick of things
often making a bottle or two,
sometimes shivering because we were short
still never forgetting the man upstairs.

Where do we go when we leave this place?
At the end of it all,
with your forgiveness
I'm sure to be
with those of us who left a day or so ago.

Art Piche

SONGS OF THE STREET 3rd Annual Poetry Night

Submit poetry to Our Voice
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Submit Poetry in the following
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FAIRY TALES
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PERSON I'VE KNOWN

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Heard it yet? NEWS OF THE WORLD

Medicines make monster yaks and yeti

It's all been going horribly wrong with hair products. In New York, a woman is suing a company after their hair-restoration programme caused her to grow a beard. "They've turned me into a yeti," she wailed. Likewise, Austrian body builder Marcus Grasz, whose encounter with a particularly patent anti-baldness treatment left him not only with a full head of hair, but a full body of the stuff too. Mr Grasz, 27, of Vienna, had turned to the treatment after noticing a bald patch on his head. "I do body-building competitions," he explained, "and some judges deduct points for baldness." He duly purchased a bottle of Hair-Growth Miracle Pills and, with an important competition coming up the following week, took the two-month course in two days. To his delight, his bald patch grew over almost immediately. Unfortunately, so did everywhere else on his body, leaving him looking, in his own words, like "a giant muscly yak". He has since given up body building and started a scaffolding erection business instead.

One final point in the Ukraine

Politicians have been going to extraordinary lengths to make a point. In Italy, MP Marco Pannella has been handing out free hashish to encourage the legalisation of drugs. In the Ukraine, meanwhile, counsellor Sergei Mosin took an overdose of sleeping pills to protest about the inefficiency of his local ambulance service. Mr Mosin, 51, of Lubny, was renowned for his bizarre publicity stunts. On one occasion he published photographs of himself having sex to emphasise the importance of wearing a condom, while on another he set fire to the council chamber to protest about cuts in the fire service. His most dramatic awareness-raiser, however, came when, surrounded by journalists, he deliberately took a massive overdose of barbiturates and then called an ambulance, the idea being to highlight the disgraceful length of time it would take the emergency services to react. His point was proved when the ambulance didn't arrive for five hours, by which point Mr Mosin was dead. "He's raised an important issue," admitted the local mayor, "and when we've got time we'll definitely look into it."

Beware the blow-up pachyderm

People have been getting into trouble with inflatable mammals. In Japan, a couple spent 24 hours drifting in shark-infested waters after being swept out to sea on a blow-up dolphin. In California, meanwhile, a man was killed by a giant inflatable elephant. Children's entertainer Marion Pistol, 34, of Oxnard, was known throughout the state for his blow-up pachyderm, Colonel Jumbo. "He made the Colonel himself," explained Mr Pistol's widow. "it was 20 feet high, and self-inflating. The kids loved it." On the morning of the tragedy, Mr Pistol had placed Colonel Jumbo - suitably deflated - on the back seat of his car and set off for a children's party in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, as Mr Pistol sped down the freeway at 90mph, the Colonel suddenly took it upon himself to inflate, completely filling the interior of the vehicle and causing his master to lose control and smash into a wall. "A car sped past me with an elephant at the wheel," said one eyewitness. "I wasn't surprised."

Age is no obstacle in grand larceny

Bankrobbers are getting older and older. In America, 77-year-old Ray Boeger held up a bank in order to pay his wife's medical bills. Mr Boeger is a veritable spring chicken, however, compared to 98-year-old Fabio Cardelli, who proved that age is no barrier to crime by robbing a bank in Naples. Mr Cardelli, a lifelong petty thief, undertook the robbery as a matter of principle after his grandson had teased him about being "old and past it". From the moment he walked into the bank, however, things went wrong. His eyesight not being good, he initially pointed his gun at a portrait on the wall, mistaking it for a cashier. When he eventually found a real cashier, his voice was so frail she couldn't hear what he was saying. She understood his demands in the end and handed over the money in used notes, but by that point the police had already been called and had surrounded the building. They needn't have bothered, however, for on his way out an exhausted Mr Cardelli sat down for a rest and promptly fell asleep. "He's a proud man," said his grandson. "He once tried to kidnap Sophia Loren as a birthday present for my mother."

Articles compiled by Paul Sussman in **The Big Issue**, London, England's street-sold magazine.

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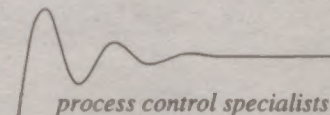
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Words on the Street

JOHN'S STYLE FILE Baba

John Zapantis Our Voice vendor, writer and photographer meets the most interesting people.



BY JOHN ZAPANTIS

"Who's that tall religious fanatic wearing that awkward looking castle hat, attired in 'wiseman's' clothing? Is he a wacko or something?"

Baba gets some odd looks when he saunters along Edmonton's Whyte Avenue with friends, doing the "Baba walk."

Baba says his clothes are his comfortable way of dressing, and have been for years, he's not going to change his dress style for others.

"Mostly people are curious. They want to know why I dress the way I do. 'Where do you come from?' they ask me. So, in all honesty, I have to say it's not where I come from, it's who I am. Where I come from, people don't dress like this."

Going to a job interview, would he dress the same way? "Most certainly, I've tried to modify in the past, but then I end up feeling really weak and stupid. I put on a pair of pants because that was expected of me, but it

just isn't me, I can't function."

Baba feels comfortable in his community and on Whyte Avenue, with the young people, buskers. "There's lots of warmth, lots of smiles, lots of kinship. They're my people. I am part of the family." He has supportive words for the young people of the streets who may often feel subjected to intolerance.

"I hear anything from, 'hey man, why are you wearing a dress?' to 'Go back where you came from,' to 'Hey, this is cool.' I like the whole gamut. But by and large the response is quite beautiful and positive. For me if I was intolerant of anything, it hurts my own heart. So tolerance is not something I do to accommodate you, I do it because it suits me."

Baba's a proud parent of two boys in school, and a talented radio host, "Master Crocodile" on his program, "Crocodile Connection" Wednesday mornings from 9 to 11 am on CJSR Radio, 88.5 FM. ♦

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SALT is Self-Advocacy and Leadership Training, a program of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). They are inviting all interested to a one-day workshop in Edmonton on Saturday February 28th.

Peter Kossowan, a facilitator, trainer and Distinguished Toast Master will be the key note speaker of the day. He will be talking about "taking control of your life..." Other presentations and workshops will be on stress management, public speaking, how to put order into your life and other topics.

The whole workshop is being organized by SALT program graduates, and the cost is only \$3.50 for the day including lunch. For more information contact The Alberta North Central CMHA at 414-6300. ♦

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Vendors buy their copies of the paper to sell and pay up to 60 cents apiece. (If they buy 50 or more they get a discount). Many vendors start with some copies on credit, and build up to a sizable inventory, that they sell.

Our Voice the spare change magazine

10 Our Voice

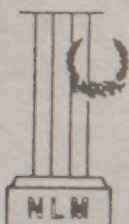
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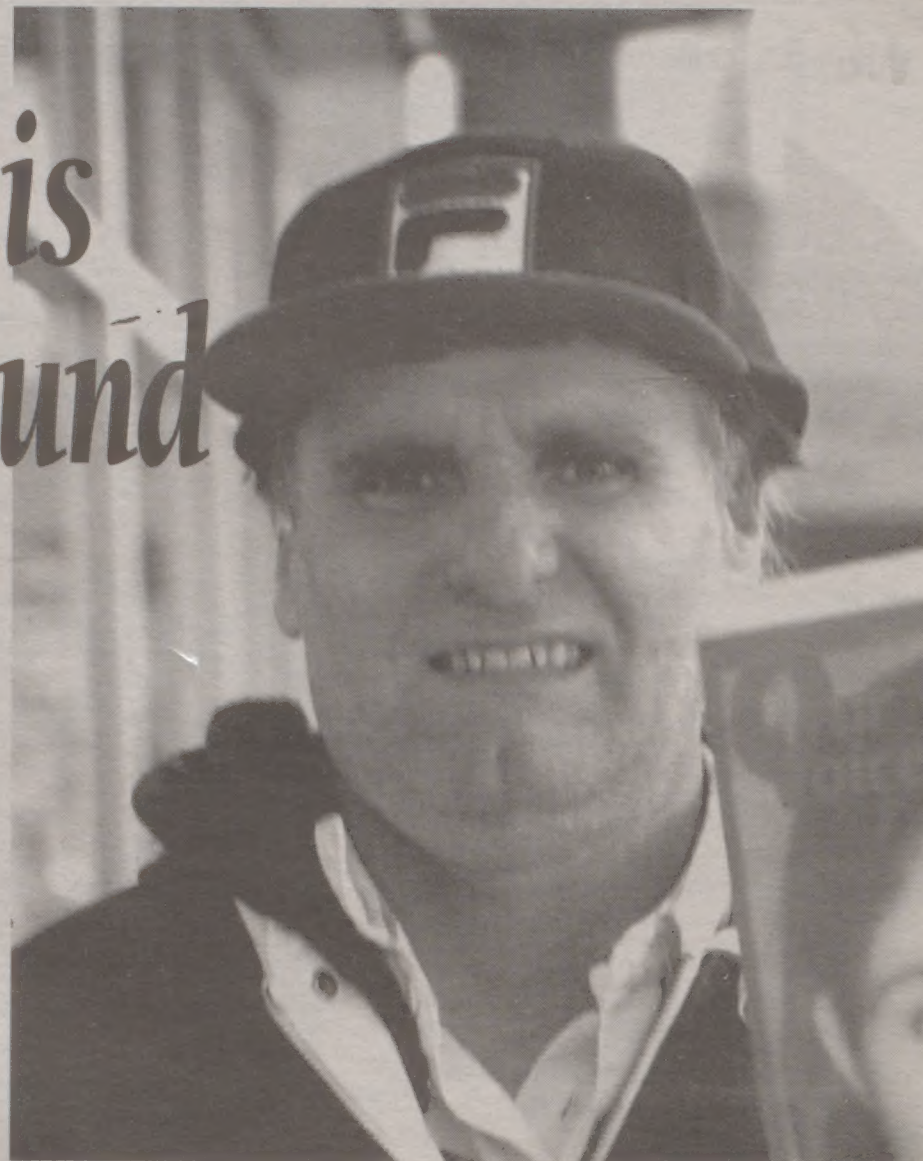
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Ask for Peter

IN CALGARY

Dennis Fryklund



Dennis has been selling *Our Voice* on Calgary's busiest streets for nearly four years. He was the fifth vendor in Calgary to try selling the *Our Voice* magazine and it hasn't let him down so far.

"It's been a very positive part of my life," says Dennis. "It's often helped me keep my head above water."

Dennis, who receives an AISH pension (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped), currently lives with his sister in Calgary's north end.

"It's temporary, just until I get my own place," he says.

With the late, but sudden, arrival of winter to Alberta this year, Dennis found himself unable to sell for awhile.

"Physically I'm pretty healthy, but with the cold weather and standing all the time, it got to my feet. I had to take some time off until they healed up. It's hard to deal with the cold weather, but I have to so I stick it out I guess," Dennis says in his shy soft spoken manner.

After all of these years, Dennis is pleased with the progression of the paper, but admits it would be good if *Our Voice* could again find a home office in Calgary.

"There would be more vendors around that way. We kind of all look out for each other. It's good that way."

Dennis sells his magazines in front of the Central United Church on 7th Avenue.

Dennis who turns fifty on April 20th of this year has lived in Calgary since 1981. He came from

Moose Jaw where he was born and raised.

"There wasn't a lot of opportunity there for a man in his thirties. It was a retirement town. I had to come where there was more for me to do."

Dennis' health issues have made it difficult for him to keep jobs in the past. He has worked in a mill, painted, learned dry walling and cleaned hotels.

"*Our Voice* is good in the way that I'm my own boss. It's like I'm self employed. I don't have to worry about getting fired. I enjoy it," he says.

"I try never to get discouraged. A lot of people walk by and look as if they could care less about what I'm doing, but that's their right I suppose."

Dennis has met a lot of good friends through selling the

paper. They are people who help him with a number of things and people who he tries to care for as well. Four years is a long time and Dennis is a true *Our Voice* man. He deserves a lot of credit for his courage and commitment to the magazine.

"I would like to say thanks to my regular customers. I really appreciate them. They've been great. One of my regulars even gave me a bit of a Christmas bonus this year," Dennis says. "So thank you." ♦

VENDOR Profile

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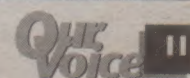
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OUR VOICE VENDOR'S CODE

- I will be sober at all times while working
- I will be polite to all members of the public
- I will vend only in areas that are authorized



"I wish the rest of society was more like the inner city," says Pastor Faith Brace. Faith has worked in the inner city for three years now.

"I feel like I'm in a very privileged position which allows me to see the truth of this community. If people know you and trust you here, all the good things become more evident. Things like the goodness, the generosity, the courage and the humour."

People who live a life with little in terms of worldly possessions find themselves very open to spiritual leadership, whether it be good or bad and Faith takes her position of privilege very seriously.

"The people in this community live on faith and hope. They are very respecting of these things. They trust me because I've shown that God cares for them and to convince them of that I have to demonstrate that I care for them. I can't just say I do. I have to mean it. If I make promises to people I have to live up to my promises. I can't make promises I can't keep. In this community you have to be trustworthy because they don't have much else."

Faith holds a service in the inner city every Sunday which sixty to eighty people attend. After the service there is a lunch that up to three hundred people come to.

"Most of our service is dedicated to prayer. People will come to me and ask for me to pray for something or for someone they know. They don't feel as though they're worthy to go before God. The truth is that they're more worthy than I. Prayer is very important to our service. There's always a long list to get through and we always do."

The inner city is often a place for many people who feel that they have been given up on, time and



A series of discussions on poverty and what to do about it.

Writer Michael Walters talks to some of the people who are trying to deal with the issue of poverty and helping people affected by it.



Pastor Faith Brace

icpm
INNER CITY PASTORAL MINISTRY

time again. There is a perception that areas of high poverty are human wastelands. They are filled with misery and individual dead ends.

Faith does not deny the fact that many people living in the inner city have very hard lives, but she is adamant about the fact that they deserve no less respect than anyone else.

"Many people here are mentally ill, or have addictions or can never follow through with anything, but I'm not going to give up on them. Why would I? It's important to stick with them. You have to try to see the good in them. It's ironic how our values and our idea of Christ has been all mixed up. If Jesus were alive today he'd come to the inner city. He'd come and hang around with the people who don't count in society. He always stuck up for the outcast and tried to help the poor and the sick. He didn't condemn anyone. He was the example of God's unconditional love for everyone. God accepts people unconditionally. The people who live here are not accepted or valued by society because society worships money."

Many people in the inner city – and people who are poor regardless of where they live – have been hurt in very serious ways whether it be emotionally, physically, mentally or spiritually. They can't possibly be proficient economically. Because they don't have money they are undervalued as people and left behind.

"My role in this community well... pastor is Latin for shepherd – to take care of the flock. This is what I try to do, I try to take care of the people I know here," Faith says.

"They deserve to be treated with respect and dignity and to be shown that someone cares for them. If I was to say what my vision was it would be that these things be recognized, that these people are very worthy of respect because of who they are. Also that the world may be a little more like the inner city, you know a place where there is goodness and love. Where there is sharing and togetherness because people care about one another. There is a real honesty here. People see through the incongruities and see the ironies in the world. Every day they are dealing with life and death issues and that is what makes their lives much more real." ♦

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